



Class of 1979 Turns 65!

On Friday, February 20th, some of the Grads of '79 gathered at Kelly O'Bryan's in New Westminster to celebrate **1979 Turns 65!**

We had a great turnout and, from the moment we arrived, it was like stepping back in time. There was plenty of reminiscing, laughter over past escapades, and stories about our days at Notre Dame.

I must say we've all aged well and we can still hold our own in a bar!

We did our best to reach as many classmates as possible. Those who couldn't attend have already promised, "Next one for sure!" And good news — it looks like the next gathering will be in June so stay connected, Jugglers!!

To make sure you don't miss out on future get-togethers, please **send your contact information to Sue Benedet at scirillo@ndrs.org**, and we'll be sure to include you.



Class of 1979 turns 65!



Class of 1966 at their 30th Reunion

Class of 1966 Reunion

Members of the class of 1966 are warmly invited to celebrate their 60th Reunion on June 4, 2026.

Join us for a day of memories, laughter, and reconnecting with old friends as we honour six decades since our graduation. We'll tour Notre Dame in the morning followed by socializing at the Admiral Hotel in the afternoon.

Date: Thursday, June 4, 2026

Times:

- 11:00am to 12:30am - Tour of the Notre Dame campus.
- 1 to 4pm - Happy Hours at the Admiral Hotel (Times to be confirmed)

Locations:

- Notre Dame, 2880 Venables St.
- Admiral Hotel, 4125 E. Hastings St.

We look forward to celebrating this remarkable milestone together. Please share the invitation with those graduates with whom you are in contact as we'd like to connect with as many as possible. Should you have any questions or information, please contact:

- Jan Gauthier gauthier.morgan1@gmail.com 604-612-3961
- Maureen (Schink) Buchholz moebuchholz@shaw.ca 778-828-9847

Leadership Transition at Notre Dame

As many in our community may have already heard, Mr. Rog r DesLauriers announced his retirement as Principal of Notre Dame Regional Secondary School, effective January 5, 2026. We are grateful for his 18 years of dedicated leadership at NDRSS.

Immediately following his retirement, Mr. Arthur (Art) Therrien has served as Interim Principal for the remainder of the school year. Mr. Therrien brings more than three decades of experience in Catholic education. His background includes 21 years serving as a principal in the Diocese of Victoria and nine years as Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Nelson. His leadership and experience are a great blessing to the Notre Dame community during this time of transition.

On February 6, the Catholic Independent Schools of the Vancouver Archdiocese (CISVA) announced that Mrs. Andrea Prout-Bernett has been hired by Notre Dame as the next principal, effective September 1, 2026. Mrs. Prout-Bernett has served in Catholic education for more than 25 years. Most recently, she was Principal of St. John Paul II Academy from 2024 to 2025, where she led the school through a campus transition while increasing enrolment and implementing new programs. Mrs. Prout-Bernett and her family are



Class of 1979

active parishioners of Star of the Sea Parish in Surrey.

We thank Mr. DesLauriers for his many years of faithful service and wish him every blessing in his well-deserved retirement. We also warmly welcome Mr. Therrien and Mrs. Prout-Bernett, and look forward to Mrs. Prout-Bernett's leadership as Notre Dame continues its mission of Catholic education.

Mary O'Neill Awarded Freedom of the City Honours

The City of Coquitlam Council recently awarded Freedom of the City honours to Mary O'Neill (née McKinnon, Class of 1972) for her outstanding contributions to education, student well-being, and community support.

Over nearly four decades in School District 43 Coquitlam, Mary led initiatives in crisis response, restorative justice, and counselling for students and families. Since retiring, she continues to mentor future educators and counsellors and has taught at City University of Seattle Counselling.

Mary has also provided vital leadership over the past decade with the Talitha Koum Society, supporting women in healing from trauma and overcoming addictions through two recovery homes and a bridging home.



During her years at Notre Dame, Mary was an enthusiastic and active student, graduating as valedictorian in 1972. She was part of the cast of *Guys and Dolls*, which starred Lui Passaglia and Mary Rose Defrenza. Many years later, she returned for alumni productions of *Our Town* and *The Unexpected Guest*. Despite evening rehearsals over several weeks, Mary never hinted she was too busy to participate, nor did she mention her extensive community service or the



Mary O'Neill recipient of Coquitlam Freedom of the City award

drive from Coquitlam, a testament to her wholehearted commitment.

Mary is a longtime member of St. Joseph's Parish, where she currently serves on the Parish Council. She has also contributed to the Project Advance committee, the Education Committee of Archbishop Carney Regional Secondary School, and the Archbishop's Pastoral Council.

Mary O'Neill's quiet dedication and service make her a proud exemplar of Notre Dame's motto: Know, Love, Serve.

Leap of trust: Notre Dame students prove their independence at Disneyland

When a group of Vancouver Catholic students and teachers travelled to Disneyland in California last month, it was far from a typical international school trip.

The 16 students from Notre Dame Regional Secondary have conditions such as autism, ADHD, and dyslexia, learning differences that the

school's Student Resource Department sees not as problems to be fixed but as "unique ways each brain brings something to the world."

Those differences in experiencing, thinking, and learning can be strengths for the "neurodivergent," said resource department head Josipa Esposito.

The students learned to advocate for themselves, work as a team, manage responsibilities, and "dream boldly in spaces where neurodiverse learners have historically been left out," said Esposito.

Some had never been on a plane. Others had never experienced the kind of social or sensory environment Disneyland offers — which, with the right planning and support, can become "a space of wonder, independence, and confidence-building."

The students navigated airports, managed money, and explored the theme park independently. More than a vacation, "it was a milestone," said Esposito.

In fact, the students even planned the trip themselves, meeting B.C. curriculum learning goals by managing budgeting, coordinating



Justin Cuison, Jadranka Erlic, Xavier Lacson, Josipa Esposito on the Jungle Cruise ride at Disneyland in California during a special trip to help neurodivergent students build life skills and memories. (Submitted photos)



The Notre Dame group poses with Mickey Mouse at the entrance to Disneyland in California.

logistics, and leading fundraising efforts bake sales, coffee carts, pizza lunches. They also created a website ndrdisney.com where they shared updates and collected donations.

“To our knowledge, this is the first time a school in the CISVA has organized something like this,” said Esposito.

Below, Notre Dame art teacher and Student Resource Case Manager Jadranka Erlic reflects on the risks taken, the lessons learned, and the growth witnessed along the way.

By Jadranka Erlic

The trip began at the YVR departure gate with a prayer. Sixteen neurodiverse Notre Dame students from Grades 9–12 stood alongside four teachers who believed deeply in possibility.

Together we prayed, asking God to watch over our journey and St. Christopher to guide our travels.

There was excitement but also vulnerability. We knew this trip carried risk, but we also knew it held extraordinary potential. It was a leap of faith rooted in trust, courage, and the belief that our students were capable of far more than the limits often placed upon them.

Joining me were teachers Josipa Esposito, Roberta Marghetti, Sandra Reis, and Angela

Mason, who all shared a conviction that neurodiverse students deserve opportunity, trust, and high expectations. The purpose was simple and bold: to challenge assumptions and entrust students with independence.

Over three days, courage took root and confidence followed.

From the beginning, students stepped into responsibility with maturity and determination. They navigated busy terminals, managed boarding passes and passports, and spoke for themselves when going through customs. For many, what appeared routine carried quiet pressure. Still, they handled each moment with calm confidence.

That growth did not come without challenge. There were quiet moments of hesitation, whether it was a deep breath before boarding the plane or a pause at the entrance to an intimidating ride. In those moments, students encouraged one another and hesitation gave way to courage. Confidence grew in steady, intentional steps.



Student Xavier Lacson beside Lightning McQueen in Cars Land.



Students and teachers wait for the plane in Vancouver.

When we offered independent time in the park, it required trust from all of us. Students navigated crowds in small groups, made decisions together, and returned to designated meeting places. Every time we gathered they were there, smiling and accountable, exactly where they said they would be.

In those moments, it was not simply pride we felt. It was affirmation. Limits were unnecessary. Opportunity and trust were what mattered.

Growth was evident in the responsibilities they carried each day, managing their allowance thoughtfully, prioritizing meals before souvenirs, waiting patiently in long lines, and communicating respectfully when guidance was needed.

Thankfulness marked the trip. One student shared, “I’m grateful for the opportunity to participate in this trip.” Another smiled and said, “I don’t want to go home.”

Parents followed the journey through daily updates and photos, replying with messages that reflected trust and appreciation, showing the

experience mattered not only to the students, but also to the families who believed in what was possible.

As Catholic educators, we believe every child is intentionally created in the image and likeness of God. Each young person carries unique gifts along with challenges that shape who they are becoming. Those challenges are invitations to resilience and growth. When we see students through the lens of dignity and hold expectations rooted in love rather than limitation, something beautiful unfolds. Young people begin to recognize within themselves what God has seen all along.

This experience was not simply a trip to Disneyland. It was a declaration — that capability does not belong to a particular category. It belongs to every young person created intentionally by God.

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<https://bccatholic.ca/news/catholic-van/leap-of-trust-notre-dame-students-prove-their-independence-at-disneyland>

Alumni Association Scholarships

The Notre Dame Alumni Association remains committed to supporting the next generation of students by providing \$1,500 annually to fund two Notre Dame Alumni Scholarships. These scholarships will be awarded each year to two graduating students, one boy and one girl, who are children of a Notre Dame alumnus or alumna. Recipients are selected based on demonstrated distinction in at least two, and preferably three, of the following areas: Christian Leadership, Christian Service, Academics, Athletics, and the Performing Arts (including Acting, Show Choir, and Band). **Your donation to the Alumni Association helps make these scholarships possible, continuing a proud tradition of encouraging excellence, faith, and service among Notre Dame students.**

FINANCIAL REPORT			
BALANCE FORWARD as of December 2023			
			\$8,946.01
REVENUE			
	Donations	\$2,949.00	
	Registrations	\$1,691.10	
	Special Donation event for Gavin Kamoschinski's recovery on behalf of Alan Charlton 90th birthday (to be forwarded to Lisa Kamoschinski)	\$8,145.00	
			\$12,785.10
EXPENSES			
	ND Alumni Scholarships (2024 & 2025)	\$2,000.00	
	Bank Service Charges	\$241.53	
	Special donation event -- total funds received	\$8,145.00	
	Plus ND Alumni donation (payable to L. Kamoschinski)	\$1,500.00	
			\$11,886.53
BANK BALANCE as of December 2025			\$9,844.58

Notre Dame Alumni Association Membership Form

Address:
 Notre Dame Alumni Association
 C/O Notre Dame Regional Secondary
 2880 Venables Street
 Vancouver, BC
 Canada V5K 4Z6

Please provide the following information with your \$20.00 cheque:

Name _____
 Grad Year _____
 Address _____

 Province/State _____ Postal/Zip _____
 Country _____